

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-07

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 SP-02 PM-03 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05

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FM AMEMBASSY JIDDA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1803

INFO AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI

/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 2579

/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 6389

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL DHAHRAN

AMEMBASSY DOHA

AMEMBASSY MANAMA

AMEMBASSY SANA

AMEMBASSY TEHRAN

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L JIDDA 4886

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, SA

SUBJECT: CHANGES IN SAUDI CABINET

REF: JIDDA 3581

SUMMARY: THERE IS HEIGHTNED EXPECTATION OF CABINET CHANGES AFTER THE BUDGET IS ANNOUNCED JULY 10; EVEN THE PRESS HAS MENTIONED THE LIKLIHOOD. IN REFTEL WE REPORTED THAT SOME FUNCTIONS OF THE FINANCE MINISTRY ARE LIKELY TO BE STRIPPED FROM IT AND DISTRIBUTED TO OTHER MINISTRIES. A NEW MINISTRY OR AGENCY MIGHT ALSO BE FORMED FROM THE PRESENT MUNICIPALITIES DIRECTORATE OF THE INTERIOR MINISTRY. MINISTERS RUMORED MOST CONFIDENTIAL

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LIKELY TO BE CHANGED INCLUDE HEALTH, INFORMATION, COM-

MUNICATIONS, COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, AND AGRICULTURE--
ESPECIALLY THE LAST TWO. VICE MINDEF PRINCE TURKI
IS KNOWN TO BE HANKERING FOR THE INDEPENDENCE OF HIS OWN
MINISTRY BUT NONE OF THE SLOTS MOST LIKELY TO COME OPEN
CAN MATCH HIS PRESENT JOB FOR POWER AND PREQS. VIR-
TUALLY NO CABINET CHANGES TOOK PLACE WHEN KHALID
BECAME KING FOR THE SAKE OF AN APPEARANCE OF CONTINUITY
AND STABILITY. SOME ADJUSTMENT OF PERSONALITIES IS NOW
TO BE EXPECTED. WE EXPECT THAT THE MAIN THRUST OF ANY
CHANGES WILL BE IN THE DIRECTION OF GREATER EFFICIENCY
IN IMPLEMENTING DEVELOPMENT PLANS. END SUMMARY.

1. IN ITS ISSUE FOR JULY 3 THE QUITE NEW SAUDI WEEKLY
MAGAZINE AL IQRA'S CARRIES AN UNUSUAL PIECE OF PREDICTIVE
POLITICAL REPORTING. THE GIST OF THE SHORT ARTICLE
IS THAT MINOR CABINET CHANGES ARE EXPECTED SHORTLY,
PERHAPS WITHIN THE MONTH AND THAT THE CHANGES MIGHT
INVOLVE THE SPLITTING OR REORGANIZATION OF SOME MINISTRIES.
BY SAUDI ARABIAN STANDARDS, THIS IS ALMOST DARING RE-
PORTING.

2. AS REPORTED REFTEL, SOME CABINET CHANGES ARE EXPECTED
SOME TIME AFTER THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE BUDGET ON JULY 10.
THERE IS LITTLE NEW HARD INFORMATION ON THE SUBJECT, BUT
THE MOST PERSISTENT RUMORS OF CHANGE CONCERN THE FOL-
LOWING MINISTERS: HEALTH, ABDULAZIZ AL KHUWAYTER; INFOR-
MATION, IBRAHIM ABDULLAH AL ANQARI; COMMUNICATIONS, MOHAMMED
OMAR TAWFIQ; COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY, MOHAMMED AL AWADI;
AGRICULTURE AND WATER, HASSAN MISHARI. THE LAST TWO ARE
MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED AS DUE FOR A CHANGE. MIS-
HARI IS REPORTEDLY TIRED AND LOOKING FORWARD TO BEING
RELIEVED AFTER MORE THAN A DOZEN YEARS IN THE JOB.

3. AS NOTED REFTEL, THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE IS THE
PRIME TARGET FOR A REORGANIZATION WHICH WOULD STRIP IT OF SOME
SOME PRESENT FUNCTIONS. IT IS UNCLEAR WHAT WOULD HAPPEN
TO MINFINANCE PRINCE MUSAID AND MINSTATE FOR
FINANCIAL AFFAIRS ABA AL KHAYL. THE POSITIONS OF BOTH ARE
RELATIVELY WEAKER THAN THEY WERE IN FAISAL'S DAY.
ANOTHER MINISTRY WHERE CHANGE IS POSSIBLE IS INTERIOR.
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IT WOULD BE A FARILY SIMPLE OPERATION TO SEPARATE THE NOW
VIRTUALLY AUTHONOMOUS DIRECTORATE OF MUNICIPAL AFFAIRS
AND TURN IT INTO AN INDEPENDENT MINISTRY OR AGENCY. FROM THE
STANDPOINT OF FUNCTION, IT WOULD MAKE SENSE.

4. THERE IS LESS INFORMATION AS TO WHO IS LIKELY TO BE
NAMED TO HEAD MINISTRIES. VICE MINISTER OF DEFENSE
TURKI BIN ABD AL-AZIZ IS A POSSIBLE CANDIDATE, BUT IT IS

PRESENTLY DIFFICULT TO SEE WHERE HE WOULD FIT. HE IS KNOWN TO BE CHAFFING IN HIS SUBORDINATE POSITION AT THE DEFENSE MINISTRY. MINDEF SULTAN, WHO IS ONE OF THE MOST ENERGETIC AND HARD-WORKING OF THE PRINCES SEEMS TO SENSE THIS AND GOES OUT OF HIS WAY TO LEAVE MAJOR FUNCTIONS OF THE MINISTRY TO TURKI. ONE OF THE DIFFICULTIES IN PICTURING TURKI IN A MINISTERIAL POSITION IS THAT NONE OF THOSE MOST LIKELY TO BECOME VACANT HAVE THE POWER AND PERQUISITES OF HIS PRESENT VICE-MINISTERIAL POSITION.

5. THE SAUDIS ARE NOT OVERLY FOND OF CHANGE AND APPROACH IT CAUTIOUSLY. TO SOME EXTENT THE LIKELY CABINET CHANGES WOULD BE AN ADMUSTMENT OF PERSONALITIES TO THE NEW KHALID-FAHD REGIME; THE CABINET REMAINED ALMOST AS IT WAS AFTER FAISAL'S ASSASSINATION. SOME CHANGE MIGHT HAVE TAKEN PLACE EARKLIER IF THE KINGDOM'S NEW RULERS WERE NOT SO INTENT ON EMPHASIZING CONTINUITY AND STABILITY IN THE POST-FAISAL PERIOD. FOR THE MOST PART THE CHANGES WILL BE DESIGNED TO GIVE THE SAG AN INCREASED CAPACITY TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEMS OF ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT. THE CHANGES MAY BE ACCCOMPANIED BY A NEW STYLE OF OPERATION IN SOME AREAS, BUT ARE UNLIKELY TO BE ACCCOMPANIED IMMEDIATELY BY ANY BASIC CHANGES IN FOREIGN OR DOMESTIC POLICY.

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